

October 3, 2003

**NATIONAL FIRE PREVENTION WEEK
OCTOBER 5-11, 2003**

BISMARCK – State Fire Marshal Ray Lambert reminds consumers that next week is “National Fire Prevention Week.” The Fire Marshal’s office, a division of the Attorney General’s office, joins the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) each year to focus attention on fire prevention, safety, and awareness in the community. This year’s theme is “When Fire Strikes: Get Out! Stay Out!” Lambert said, “This is a lifesaving reminder to get out right away when the smoke alarm goes off, and to stay out until firefighters say it is safe to go back inside.”

The week in which October 9th occurs is declared as National Fire Prevention Week because it commemorates the start of the Great Chicago Fire and Peshtigo Fire of 1871. Many know of the Chicago fire, which according to popular myth was caused by Mrs. O’Leary’s cow, but do not know of the Peshtigo Fire. This fire is the largest loss forest fire in American History. It roared through northeast Wisconsin scorching 1.2 million acres, destroying 16 towns, and killing 1,152 people. These fires changed the way that firefighters and public officials think about fire safety.

According to statistics provided by the NFPA, someone is fatally injured in a home fire roughly every 170 minutes. In 2002, there were 2,569 fires reported to the State Fire Marshal’s office, with an estimated \$8,500,000 loss. There were 11 fire-related deaths. Unattended candles or cooking pots were the cause of several of the fatal fires.

“Do not allow yourself to become a victim. Your chances of surviving a fire are increased by 50% if your home has working smoke alarms,” said State Fire Marshal Ray Lambert. His advice is simple:

- ? Install working smoke alarms on each level of the home, and test them monthly to ensure they are working; replace batteries regularly – such as when the clocks change in the spring and the fall.
- ? Never leave candles or cooking pots unattended, even for a moment. If you have to leave the room, blow out the candle, or take the pot off the stove and turn off the burner.
- ? Develop a thorough fire escape plan and practice it by holding fire drills twice a year; make sure you know two ways out of every room.
- ? Teach everyone in your household that once they are out, they must stay out until firefighters say it is safe to go back inside – get out first, then call the fire department.

“It only takes a few seconds to change your life forever,” said Lambert. “Smoke detectors save lives, it’s as simple as that,” he continued. For more fire safety information, contact the State Fire Marshal’s office at (701) 328-5510 or your local fire department. For more information on National Fire Prevention Week, log on to www.nfpa.org.

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